

Message Text

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ACTION ACDA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 10104

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR
SUBJ: US-USSR INDIAN OCEAN TALKS

REF: TEHRAN 09996

1. EVENING OF NOVEMBER 14 I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK SOVIET AMBASSADOR VINOGRADOV HOW AMBASSADOR MENDELEVICH'S TALKS WITH THE IRANIANS WENT ON THE INDIAN OCEAN. VINOGRADOV TOLD ME THAT MENDELEVICH HAD GIVEN THE IRANIANS A STATUS REPORT ON THE US-USSR TALKS WHICH AS HE DESCRIBED IT WAS VERY MUCH ALONG THE LINES OF THE SAME REPORT WE HAD GIVEN THE GOI ON THE BASIS OF STATE 238371 AND 241701. VINOGRADOV SAID THAT INITIALLY HE HAD SENSED THAT THE IRANIANS WERE WORRIED THAT THE U.S. AND USSR MAY BE WORKING OUT SOME KIND OF ARRANGEMENT BEHIND IRAN'S BACK WHICH COULD PROVE TO BE TO IRAN'S DISADVANTAGE. HE SAID ALSO THAT THE IRANIANS HAD EXPRESSED SOME IRRITATION AT NOT BEING INCLUDED IN THE TALKS AND/OR NOT BEING KEPT MORE CLOSELY INFORMED. ACCORDING TO VINOGRADOV THE IRANIANS SEEMED MUCH MORE RELAXED AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE SOVIET EXPLANATION AND PLEASED THAT THE SOVIETS HAD TAKEN THE TROUBLE TO SEND THE HEAD OF THEIR DELEGATION TO TEHRAN TO FILL THEM IN ON OUR TALKS. HE SAID THAT MENDELEVICH HAD "DIPLOMATICALLY"

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MADE THE POINT THAT THE INDIAN OCEAN WAS NOT THE EXCLUSIVE PRESERVE OF THE LITTORAL STATES AND THAT MARITIME POWERS SUCH AS THE U.S. AND USSR HAD LEGITIMATE RIGHTS IN CRUISING THE AREA MAKING FRIENDLY MILITARY VESSEL PORT CALLS AND OTHERWISE INSURING THAT THE SEA LANES WERE OPEN AND SAFE FOR COMMERCIAL PASSAGE. HE SAID THAT MEDELEVICH WENT ON TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THE U.S. AND THE USSR WERE NOT AT THE STAGE

OF CONFRONTATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AND THAT THE PRINCIPAL PURPOSE OF THE U.S.-USSR TALKS WAS TO INSURE THAT NEITHER SIDE INCREASED ITS MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE AREA TO A CONFRONTATION LEVEL. MENDELEVICH ASSURED THE IRANIANS THAT THE US-USSR TALKS IN NO WAY IMPINGED ON IRANIAN INTEREST WHICH HE ACKNOWLEDGED WERE LEGITIMATE--IRAN BEING ONE OF THE INDIAN OCEAN'S LITTORAL STATES--AND SAID THAT THERE WAS NO INTENTION OF A DEAL BEING MADE BEHIND IRAN'S BACK. IN SUM, VINOGRADOV THOUGHT THAT THE TALKS HAD GONE VERY WELL AND THAT THEY HAD BEEN PARTICULARLY USEFUL AND TIMELY IN VIEW OF THE SHAH'S IMMINENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER, WHERE THE SUBJECT OF THE INDIAN OCEAN MIGHT COME UP.

2. EARLIER IN THE DAY I HAD ASKED ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ZELLI HOW THE MENDELEVICH TALKS HAD GONE. ZELLI EVIDENCED SURPRISE THAT I WAS AWARE OF MENDELEVICH'S VISIT AND SAID THAT HE HAD NOT MENTIONED IT TO ME BECAUSE "YOU HAVE NOT CHOSEN TO TELL US ABOUT THE US-USSR TALKS." HE ADDED THAT HE COULD NOT SAY ANYTHING FURTHER ON THE SUBJECT. I REMONSTRATED THAT HIS WAS NOT TRUE AND THAT WE HAD IN FACT PROVIDED THE SHAH AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER WITH TWO STATUS REPORTS. ZELLI SAID THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF THIS.

COMMENT: THIS IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE LESS THAN PERFECT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE COURT AND FOREIGN MINISTER AND CONFIDENTIAL

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INDEED WITHIN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ITSELF. IT REFLECTS ALSO SUSPICIONS NEVER VERY FAR BELOW THE SURFACE IN IRANIAN MINDS ABOUT GREATER POWER MACHINATIONS TO THE EXTENT THAT WE CAN ALLEVIATE THESE SUSPICIONS BY KEEPING IRAN INFORMED ON MATTERS SUCH AS THIS, SO MUCH THE BETTER. IT WOULD BE APPRECIATED IF THE DEPARTMENT WOULD BEAR THIS IN MIND AS WE MOVE INTO THE NEXT ROUND OF OUR TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS ON THE INDIAN OCEAN.

MIKLOS

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